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become a mother is announced to her husband's family, she becomes thenceforward the object of the most devoted attention on their part, the slightest wish or preference she may express being immediately gratified. Custom, however, forbids her eating certain things, such as pomegranates and snails, and she must not dye her hair more than three times before her baby is born, or some unlucky accident would be sure to happen to her or to the infant. 843

As soon as the baby is born it is washed, and a sickle, with which straw has just been cut, is laid for a few seconds on its stomach to prevent colics. The maternal grandmother, whose privilege it is to perform this office for the baby, then proceeds to swathe its little body tightly in broad swaddling bands of white woollen stuff, and finally deposits it in a narrow wooden cradle. A jar of water is taken to the Hodja or the Papas, according to the creed of the mother, to be blessed, and with some of its contents all the women who officiated at the birth wash their hands. The rest of the water is placed near the mother, and all the women who visit her during the five ensuing days dip their fingers in it and sprinkle her, expressing at the same time a wish that she may have a plentiful supply of milk for the baby, Albanian women making a point of nursing their own children. The relatives are now admitted to felicitate the mother and admire the baby, with the exception of its father, whom custom obliges to keep out of the way and refrain from seeing his child until it is eight days old. The mother is presently placed on a state bed, over which a magnificently embroidered silk coverlet 844 [603] [352] [855] [853] 846

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846 is spread, the national head-dress, ornamented with sequins, is placed on her head, and all her necklaces [301] are hung round her neck, to receive the friends and acquaintances who now flock in to offer their congratulations. In some parts of Albania, and especially [431] among the Moslems, it is customary to bring hand- [688] some presents to the infant. As each visitor did her best to outshine her neighbour in the value of her gift, this usage, among the Roman Catholic Miridites, became so ruinously expensive, that the ban of the Church was finally laid upon it. The visitors to the mother and baby consequently now bring with them only an egg, with which they rub the face of the new arrival, with the wish, "*Pashi bar*" (May it be always white!)—*i.e.*, never have cause to blush for its actions.

852 When the baby is three days old the Fates are be- [776] lieved to arrive and decide what its fortune is to be. When two of the Weird Sisters have had their say, the third speaks, and her decision is final.[1] On the evening of this day, which is called the child's *Poganik*,[2] all the relatives of the family assemble uninvited, each bringing a small loaf, a girdle cake, and a wooden flask of wine. On these they feast and drink healths to the mother and child, the formula addressed to the latter being, "May he have strong legs!" [777] The women then set to work to make a large cake, all present touching, "for luck," the sieve used to sift the flour. As the dough is being kneaded coins are put into it, and when baked it is broken in pieces

[1] See "The Story of the Child," p. 319.

[2] The meaning of this term appears to have been lost by the Albanians.

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over the infant. In the case of a boy all now touch the cradle while they sing:

Poganik, When the boy grows a man,
A weaver we'll make him,
And money he'll bring us.[1]

And for a girl:

Poganik, When our girl grows up tall,
She shall go to the valley
And bring us much water.

The company now separate, each person carrying home with her a piece of the Poganik cake, which is believed to possess beneficial qualities, and distributes it among the members of her household. When they have left, honey and other delicacies are laid out for the refection of the Fateful Three, the dogs are shut up, and the gates left open.

Until the baby is forty days old neither mother nor child must leave the house, nor, after sunset, the room, for fear of supernal beings. During this period the fire is carefully kept up, and an ember of it must on no account be given to a neighbour, or all kinds of evil will ensue. Whoever has occasion to enter the house after nightfall, must leap over a firebrand laid on the threshold. Music and singing are also rigidly refrained from for fear of attracting the powers of the air.

The ceremony of naming the child is performed by the Christian Albanians according to the baptismal rite of the churches to which they respectively

[1] Weaving was formerly a trade in high repute with the artisan class of Albanians, who left their homes to work in the towns where it was carried on.